Using Multiple Types of Data to Improve Student Learning About Diversity

Background Information

Westmont is a Christian Liberal Arts college located in Santa Barbara, CA with a student population of 1,260. Thirty-nine percent of the student population and 12% of the faculty self-identify as people of color. Diversity is one of the college’s institutional learning outcomes, which results in follow-ups: Westmont graduates will be able to analyze topics and human experiences using categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, social status, and disability.

Direct Assessment: Assessment Tools

In 2014-15, Pacific University, University of San Diego, and Westmont College collaborated on developing a signature assignment and rubric for assessing student learning in relation to diversity and also, planned a diversity project on their campuses. The rubric was developed from several AACU VALUE rubrics. The readings are various aspects of cultural, socio-economic, and religious differences were paired with questions designed to guide students’ responses.

The following year, 2015-16, Westmont College assembled a Diversity Assessment Committee from across the college. Taking a cue from the work done in 2014-15, the committee adapted the rubric used in the preliminary study. For the modified version of the Diversity Signature Assignment (DSA), the Diversity Assessment Committee chose a similar reading that focused strictly on race, namely the November 2015 Miami Herald article entitled “Shoppers fighting back against ‘shopping while black’ profiling with social media, lawsuits” by Luis Gutierrez. Students were asked to write short essay responses to three prompt questions, which were also adapted from the work done in 2014-15. The DSA was titled “Diversity Reflections.”

Direct Assessment: Methodology

Student written responses (n=81) to DSA were collected via Livetext in Spring 2016 from the following courses: ART 195, KNS 195 (2 sections), FBB 195, PHI 195, PHYS 105, PSY 310, RS 180, SOC 195 and TR 140. Sixty-seven percent of participants were seniors; 22% – juniors and 10% – sophomores. Once the student responses were collected, raters were recruited and trained. A team of faculty, co-curricular specialists, and librarians rated the writing samples. Two assessors were assigned to each student’s response. After the DSA was scored, the entire team gathered again to discuss the results. The group offered suggestions for closing the loop and agreed to share the interim report with the entire faculty for their input.

Direct Assessment: Key Findings

- Students were scored on a four-point rubric. In each dimension of the rubric, the majority of the students were not at the “developed” or “highly-developed” stage in their knowledge of diversity, which is lower than expected of Westmont undergraduates.
- Between 21% and 37% of students, depending on the rubric category, were at the initial stage of development, which represents a very basic understanding of the concepts. The percentage of students, who scored at such low levels, is being examined by the College.
- Westmont students scored highest in the dimensions related to empathy, and understanding and applying principles of cultural diversity. The lowest scores came in the areas related to social responsibility and faith.
- Overall, Westmont sophomores outperformed seniors.
- Ethnic minority students demonstrated better results than white students; female students outperformed male students.

Westmont Diversity Assignment scores results (2016): the entire sample

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<th>Diversity and Social Justice Rubric Adapted from AACU’s Value Rubrics</th>
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Westmont Diversity Assignment scores results (2016): seniors

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Closing the Loop

In Fall 2016, the assessment results were presented at the faculty meeting and faculty input was collected and discussed by the Academic Senate. The results were also shared with the Diversity Committee and posted on the Educational Effectiveness website. In December 2016, the Strategic Planning Committee identified diversity as one of the college’s overarching strategic goals. The Diversity Track of Work Task Force was formed. The following steps are being considered by the college:

- **Curriculum:** Where can our students learn about diversity? The Lead Assessment Specialist is updating the inventory of courses that make ethnic, gender and cultural (non-western) diversity their prevalent focus.
- **Assessment:** How do we assess our students’ learning? A rubric model was created. An initial alignment of the rubric was created.
- **Resources:** Where do we get the resources to support diversity? Westmont undergraduates are more introspective about current diversity programming, as well, more eager to learn about diversity and more prepared to work with individuals who are unlike themselves.

Indirect Assessment: Student Diverse Learning Environments (DLE) Survey

In the fall of 2016, Joseph Bitone, a Westmont Senior from the Department of Kinesiology, conducted the Student Diverse Learning Environmental (DLE) Survey developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) as his Honors project. He collected Westmont students’ responses (n=350) to five main questions and three additional diversity-related questions and compared the 2016 results to the results of a similar survey administered in 2011. The 2016 DLE survey results demonstrate that overall student awareness about issues pertaining to race, class, sexuality, equality, and equity has increased. As a result, surveying students are more introspective about current diversity programming, as well, more eager to learn about diversity and more prepared to work with individuals who are unlike themselves.

Indirect Assessment: Faculty/Staff Diversity Survey

In Fall 2016, selected questions from the Student Diverse Learning Environments Survey (DLE) were administered to Westmont faculty and staff. The main purpose of administering the Faculty/Staff Diversity Survey was to determine whether Westmont faculty and staff on student diversity learning environments through the same lenses as students do. Sixty-one faculty and 107 staff members responded to the survey.

Indirect Assessment: Faculty/Staff Diversity Survey Results

Q6: Westmont has a long standing commitment to diversity.

Q9: Westmont has a lot of racial tension.

Bibliography


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